

BRITISH RELATIONS WITH BURMA

(1826—1886)

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THE NATIONAL INFORMATION & PUBLICATIONS LTD.
BOMBAY

*Published by Kusum Nair for The National Information & Publications Ltd
National House, 6 Tulloch Road, Apollo Bunder, Bombay, and print
by R. Bourdon at Western Printers & Publishers' Press, 15 &
17 Hamam Street, Fort, Bombay*

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THE researches of scholars in the field of Indian History, particularly during the last half century, have illumined many dark corner of the history of our country, and a good deal of printed material on the subject is now available. But this knowledge is still confined to a very small number of cloistered scholars in our Universities, and to a few advanced students who are required to wade through these voluminous books for their examinations. The man-in-the-street, though very keen to know something about his heritage, has neither the time nor the inclination to read these big volumes so full of what he considers tiresome details, and repeated references to original authorities.

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Lahore, 1947.

JAGMOHAN MAHAJAN.

BRITISH RELATIONS WITH BURMA

(1826-1886)

THE FIRST ANGLO-BURMESE WAR, 1824-1826

TOWARDS the middle of the eighteenth century a new era began in the history of Burma. A vigorous royal dynasty was established by an adventurous local chief named Alaungpaya (1752-1760), who unified Upper and Lower Burma under his authority, and even carried his depredations to Manipur in the west and Siam in the south-east. His son Bodawpaya (1782-1819) conquered Arakan in 1784-1785. For many centuries Arakan had been an independent kingdom, and its political and cultural relations with Bengal had been very intimate. In 1785 Arakan became a province of the Burmese Empire. The people of Arakan, who were known in Bengal as *Mags*, now became victims of Burmese cruelty. Some of them migrated to the British district of Chittagong (Bengal), where they were accepted as British subjects and provided with waste land for cultivation. The Burmese naturally resented the emigration of their subjects, and during the period 1786-1824 there were numerous occasions when they threatened to invade British territory in pursuit of the fugitives. The troubles on the Chittagong-Arakan frontier reached their climax in 1823, when the Burmese occupied Shahpuri, a small island off Chittagong belonging to the East India Company.

Meanwhile hostilities between the British and the Burmese had broken out in Assam. Upper Assam had for many centuries been an independent state ruled by Ahom kings. The internal condition of this principality towards the close of the eighteenth century revealed many symptoms of disintegration. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Ahoms the Burmese occupied the Brahmaputra valley during the years 1817-1822. Thus the north-eastern frontier of Bengal was exposed to Burmese aggression. Manipur, a small independent principality, was subjugated by the Burmese in 1824, and attempts were made by them to occupy the principalities of Cachar and Jaintia, which Lord Amherst, the then

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Governor-General, hurriedly brought under British suzerainty in 1824. In January and February 1824, clashes took place between British and Burmese forces in Assam. The dispute regarding Shahpuri made the situation worse. War was formally declared on 5 March 1824.

The war continued for two years. It was concluded by the treaty of Yandabo, which was signed on 24 February 1826. Bagyidaw, a grandson of Bodawpaya, who was then King of Burma, renounced all claims upon Upper Assam, Manipur, Cachar and Jaintia, and ceded to the British the provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim. Some portions of Upper Assam were at first placed under the charge of an Ahom prince, but by 1842 the whole of Upper Assam was brought under British rule. Manipur, Cachar and Jaintia were given to local chiefs who acknowledged British suzerainty. Cachar was, however, annexed to the Company's possessions in 1832. Arakan was placed under a Commissioner who worked under the direct control of the Governor-General. The system of administration was gradually assimilated to that of Bengal. Tenasserim was at first subordinate to the Civil Government of Penang; after two years it was brought under the direct control of the Governor-General, and gradually the Bengal system of administration was introduced.

Two articles of the treaty of Yandabo must be mentioned here. One of them bound the Burmese King to pay to the British Government the sum of one crore of rupees 'as part indemnification for the expenses of the war.' There is no doubt that this article fell very heavily on the Burmese. The last instalment of this indemnity was paid in 1833. By another article of the treaty the Burmese King agreed to conclude a commercial treaty with the British Government, and it was laid down that each party would receive at its *Durbar* an accredited minister from the other.

BRITISH RESIDENCY IN BURMA

John Crawfurd was the first British Resident deputed to the Burmese Court under the above article of the treaty of Yandabo. He went to Ava (capital of Burma) in 1826 and concluded a commercial treaty which provided for free commercial intercourse between the subjects of the two Governments.

ernments, exempted all British vessels of a specified size from the payment of tonnage duties and port charges, offered some privileges to British merchants resident in Burmese territories, and excluded from confiscation all British vessels shipwrecked on the Burmese coast.

There is no doubt that the treaty of Yandabo was very unpopular in Burma. The article relating to the reception of envoys was, however, the most repulsive to Burmese sentiment. After Crawford's return to Calcutta no Resident was sent to Burma during the next three years. Lord William Bentinck, however, felt the necessity of continuing diplomatic relations with Burma, and Major Henry Burney was accordingly sent to Ava in 1830.

Burney acted as British Resident in Burma for eight years (1830-1838). During this fairly long period he had to deal with numerous diplomatic questions, some of which were settled satisfactorily from the Burmese point of view. He was welcomed by the Burmese, and on the whole treated with respect. When the time came for his formal reception by the King, the 'shoe question' created trouble. He was required to remove his shoes when he came near the Royal Council building. He objected and submitted a memorial to the King. After a regular tug-of-war between the Resident and the Burmese Ministers, it was decided that Burney should appear before the King without shoes, but the visit should not take place on a *Kadaw* day. It was the usual custom with the Burmese to present foreign agents to the King on a *Kadaw* day, so as to impress the people with the superiority of their King over all monarchs. Even the envoys of the Emperor of China were subjected to this indignity. The British envoys, Symes (who went to Burma in 1795) and Crawford, had also submitted to this humiliating treatment.

Soon after Burney's arrival at Ava the Burmese Government decided to send an embassy to Calcutta. Two envoys were selected, and they were entrusted with the following duties: (1) to demand the restoration of the Kabaw valley which had been given to Manipur; (2) to demand the restoration of certain parts of the Martaban district; (3) to demand the abrogation of that article of the treaty of Yandabo which provided for the appointment of 'accredited Ministers.' They

were also verbally instructed to demand the restoration of Tenasserim and Arakan. They reached Calcutta in December 1830, and left for Burma in June 1833. Their demand with regard to the Kabaw valley was satisfied, but in all other respects they were disappointed.

A passing reference may be made here to the question of the restoration of Tenasserim. Soon after the conclusion of the treaty of Yandabo it was discovered by the British Government that the annexation of this province was an unprofitable speculation. Every year the Supreme Government had to bear an expense of one and a half lakhs of rupees for this province and this charge was likely to increase since buildings, barracks, fortifications, etc., were required. In 1826 the Court of Directors suggested the restoration of this province to the Burmese King. When Burney was sent to Ava he was instructed to find out whether the King was willing to give 'some equivalent . . . in exchange for a portion or whole of the Tenasserim provinces.' After protracted negotiations Burney found that the Burmese Government would not give any 'equivalent'—neither money nor territory. So in 1833 the Court of Directors authorised the Supreme Government to retain the Tenasserim province permanently.

Burney's relations with King Bagyidaw were, on the whole, friendly, but the Resident was convinced that the King would soon take recourse to hostilities for the recovery of the lost provinces. He wrote to the Supreme Government in December 1830, "The King and those about him are manifestly dissatisfied with the present state of things. Nothing shows this more decidedly than the eagerness with which they listen to any tales brought here of disasters suffered by us in India or of hostilities projected against us by Ranjit Singh or any other chief, and their ignorance of the real superiority of our power and resources is very great. . . . All here are certain that Ava will rise again from her present reduced condition . . . and not only the King's Court but the lower ranks of the people . . . firmly believe that in the last war it was our turn to conquer, but that in the next contest it will be the turn of Ava."

In 1837, Ava saw a political revolution of far-reaching

importance : King Bagyidaw was overthrown by his brother, the Prince of Tharrawaddy. Throughout this crisis Burney maintained an attitude of strict neutrality. He tried to bring about a reconciliation between the King and his rebel brother, but his efforts did not meet with any success.

King Tharrawaddy was, in Burney's words, 'extremely uncertain and fickle ; one hour, good humoured, affable, and attentive, the next harsh, peremptory and inconsiderate.' He was anxious to get rid of the treaties of 1826. He refused to negotiate with the Governor-General, whom he described as an officer enjoying the same status as the Burmese Governor of Rangoon, and spoke of sending an embassy to the King of England. He recruited new troops, collected arms and ammunition and strengthened his frontier garrisons. Burney proposed decisive action without further delay, but the Governor-General, Lord Auckland, was opposed to war with Burma. On this Burney resigned the Residency and was succeeded by Bayfield.

In spite of the conciliatory policy of the British Government Tharrawaddy's attitude remained unchanged. Although Lord Auckland did not apprehend immediate rupture he considered it necessary to adopt precautionary measures. The British garrisons on the Assam, Arakan and Tenasserim frontiers were strengthened. The Commander-in-Chief formally recorded his views regarding the measures he recommended for the defence of the Company's territories in case of a sudden invasion.

Bayfield was succeeded in 1838 by a military officer named Benson. This new appointment was not welcomed by the Burmese Court ; but Benson went to Amarapur (the new capital of Burma) in October 1838, and remained there till March 1839. Tharrawaddy and his Ministers humiliated the Resident whenever they could and placed all manner of obstructions and difficulties in his way. In view of the war with the Afghans the Government of India could not take strong measures for the vindication of the position of the British envoy. Benson himself was not in favour of war with Burma. He left Amarapur, handing over charge to Captain McLeod, who officiated as Resident till January 1840. He was, however, compelled by the unfriendly attitude of

the Burmese Government to leave Amarapur in July 1839. For several months he remained at Rangoon, but finding that the Governor of Rangoon treated him with marked disrespect, he left for Calcutta in January 1840. Thus closed the first chapter in the history of the British Residency in Burma.

Nothing important seems to have happened immediately after Mcleod's departure from Burma. But British officers in Burma found a new cause for excitement when Tharrawaddy visited Rangoon in October 1841. Although Blundell, Commissioner of Tenasserim, continued to send alarming reports regarding the King's intention, yet the Government of India felt convinced that no serious invasion of British territory was contemplated. At Rangoon the King devoted himself entirely to the foundation of a new town and the renovation of a temple. No untoward incident took place. King Tharrawaddy's stormy rule came to an abrupt end in 1845; he was succeeded by his eldest son Pagan. It is uncertain whether Tharrawaddy ever seriously thought of declaring war against the English. In any case an open rupture was prevented by the cautious attitude of the Government of India, which wisely refused to take literally the alarming reports sent by some men on the spot.

THE SECOND ANGLO-BURMESE WAR

CAUSES

We have already referred to the commercial privileges secured for British subjects in Burma by Crawford's treaty of 1826. No serious complaint about the violation of that treaty by the officers of the Burmese King seems to have been submitted to the Government of India by any British subject during the period 1840-1850. In February 1851, the Commissioner of Tenasserim brought to the notice of the Government of India a complaint submitted to him by H. Potter, of the ship *Shilomith*. His shipbuilding operations at Rangoon, it was alleged, had been obstructed by the local Burmese officials, and he had been compelled to pay a large sum of money in violation of the commercial treaty of 1826. In June 1851, Robert Sheppard, master and owner of the barque *Monarch*, complained that he had been harassed by

the Burmese officials at Rangoon, falsely accused of murder and compelled to pay illegal fines. Another complaint came from Harold Lewis, master of the barque *Champion*, who alleged, in September 1851, that the Burmese officials at Rangoon had realised money from him and falsely accused him of murder. In the same month the European residents of Rangoon sent a memorial, stating that they had 'for a long time suffered from the tyranny and gross injustice of Burmese authorities.'

All these complaints were directed, not only against the inferior officials of the Burmese Government, but also against the Governor of Rangoon personally. No serious attempt seems to have been made by the British authorities to determine the accuracy of these allegations; but the facts narrated by the complainants are accompanied by so many details that they seem to bear the mark of truth. Moreover, the four complaints came from individuals who hardly knew each other, and it is hardly possible to suspect that they had entered into a conspiracy against the Governor of Rangoon. As a matter of fact, the trouble seems to have originated after the appointment of the new Governor of Rangoon early in 1850. Aware of King Pagan's hatred of Westerners, he 'deemed it an excellent opportunity to subject certain British traders to outrage in order to extort money from them.' It also appears that the Governor was suffering from financial difficulties, and, being unable to pay his officials, authorised them to rob the inhabitants. In any case, if the facts narrated by the British merchants were substantially true, there can be no doubt that the Governor violated the treaties of 1826 and claimed jurisdiction in cases which International Law did not entitle him to deal with.

The complaints of the British merchants were reviewed by the Government of India and it was decided that British subjects had a right to expect that they should be protected by their own Government from 'injustice, oppression, and extortion.' The Governor-General ordered that a naval officer named Lambert should proceed to Rangoon with some men-of-war, in order to secure from the Governor of Rangoon the reparation which was due to the British Government. Commodore Lambert went to Rangoon in November 1851. An

appointment was fixed up for an interview with the Governor, but the information collected by the Commodore at Rangoon convinced him that "there was much more chance of any discussion coming to a happy and peaceful termination, and no collision taking place, if held with a new Governor, than with the present incumbent." He made the removal of the Governor a preliminary to entering into any discussion about the grievances of the British merchants. A subordinate British officer saw the Governor and gave him two letters for dispatch to the capital—one from the Government of India to the King, and another from Commodore Lambert to the Prime Minister of Burma. Replies to these letters were received in January 1852. Although the Burmese Government took exception to the tone of the letters, they agreed to recall the Governor of Rangoon and to institute enquiries into the complaints of the British merchants.

But the conduct of the new Governor precipitated the crisis. He insulted some British officers who went to see him in connection with the pending negotiations. Commodore Lambert suspended all further communications with the Governor, gave asylum in his ships to British subjects resident in Rangoon, and blockaded the rivers near Rangoon. He also took possession of a ship belonging to the King of Burma, by way of reprisal. Then he sent a letter to the Burmese Ministers, protesting against the Governor's conduct and asking for explanation. The seizure of the King's ship was a violation of the orders of the Government of India, for the Commodore was not authorised to commit any act of hostility without definite instructions. But Lord Dalhousie felt unable to repudiate a *fait accompli*. In a private letter to a friend in England he wrote, 'There is no doubt that Lambert was the *immediate* cause of the war by seizing the King's ship, in direct disobedience of his orders from me. I accepted the responsibility of his act, but disapproved and censured it.'

Feelings on both sides being strained, some petty incidents added fuel to the fire. Lord Dalhousie came to the conclusion that there was 'no alternative but to exact reparation by arms.' On 18 February 1852, an ultimatum was sent to the King of Burma. It was uncompromising in its demands

and severe in its language. It demanded : (1) apology for the insult suffered by the British officers at the hands of the Governor, (2) payment of ten lakhs of rupees, (3) reception of a British Resident in conformity with Article 7 of the treaty of Yandabo, and (4) dismissal of the Governor of Rangoon. It concluded with a threat : ' . . . if, untaught by former experience ; forgetful of the irresistible power of the British arms in India ; and heedless of the many additional proofs that have been given of its might, in the successful fall of the powerful Sovereigns of Bhurtpore, of Scinde, of the Sikhs, and of many other Princes, since last the Burman rulers vainly attempted to resist the British troops in war—the King of Ava shall unwisely refuse the just and lenient conditions which are now set before him, the British Government will have no alternative but immediate war.' This was certainly too strong a letter to be addressed to an independent ruler. When the correspondence was sent to the authorities in England this letter was condemned for its severity. No reply to this ultimatum was received from the Burmese capital.

All available documents clearly reveal the important fact that Lord Dalhousie, instead of wanting or welcoming war, tried to prevent it. It must be recognised, however, that he committed a grave error of judgment when he sent a squadron under a Commodore to demand compensation on behalf of aggrieved British subjects. After the conclusion of the war he wrote in a private letter, ' It is easy to be wise after the fact. If I had the gift of prophecy I would not have employed Lambert to negotiate.' His letters, however, show that he was really fighting to maintain British prestige in the east. He wrote, ' Holding to the wisdom of Lord Wellesley's maxim, that an insult offered to the British flag at the mouth of the Ganges should be resented as promptly and as fully as an insult offered at the mouth of the Thames, I should, under any circumstances, have regarded it as sound policy to exact reparation for wrong done to British subjects from any native state.'

NAVAL AND MILITARY OPERATIONS

When war seemed imminent Lord Dalhousie made preparations which were ' organised with a military genius that won

the admiration of his colleagues and commanded success. Lieutenant-General Godwin was selected to command the expedition, and Rear-Admiral Austen, Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Naval Forces in the Eastern Seas, was placed in charge of naval operations. The 'whole political authority connected with the expedition' was vested in the General. Lord Dalhousie described him as follows: 'He is strong, vigorous, and active in body and mind. He commanded a brigade during the last (Burmese) war, knows the people and the country thoroughly, and appears to me to have very sound views as to the proper mode of dealing with them politically as well as militarily.' The expeditionary force was made up of separate contingents from Calcutta and Madras, with a squadron from Bombay. It included 19 ships, 8,489 men, and 159 guns.

Admiral Austen arrived at Rangoon on 1 April 1852, and General Godwin arrived there on the following day. The preliminary skirmishes began on 2 April. On 5 April Martaban was captured by the joint operations of the Army and Navy, and this important incident may be regarded as the beginning of the war. Martaban was an important place, and easily defensible; but the Burmese failed to make good use of their advantage.

The next exploit of the British military and naval forces was the capture of Rangoon (11-14 April). Rangoon was a strongly defended town. The casualties in the British Navy were: 3 killed, 27 wounded. The casualties in the British Army were: 19 killed, 147 wounded. The success of the operations was due in a great measure to the co-operation of the Army and the Navy. From 15 April onwards the British troops began to encamp near and within the Great Pagoda.

The next important incident was the capture of Bassein—(19 May). Bassein occupies an important strategical position. During the First Anglo-Burmese War it had been occupied by the British troops, and Sir Archibald Campbell, who commanded the expeditionary force in that war, had declared it to be the key of the Burmese Empire.

A Burmese attack on Martaban was repulsed on 26 May. The British forces then turned their attention to the city of Pegu. The Talaing inhabitants of the province of Pegu were

hostile to the Burmese whom they regarded as their conquerors and oppressors. It was in response to an appeal for help from the Talaings that an expedition was sent for the reduction of the city of Pegu, which fell into British hands on 4 June. It was temporarily placed under a descendant of the former ruling dynasty which had been ousted by the Burmese about a century before. Prome was occupied on 9 July, but it had to be given up for want of troops to garrison it.

The initial objectives of the Government of India were thus attained within a few weeks of the arrival of the British troops in Burmese waters. But the anticipated overtures of peace from Amarapur (capital of Burma) were not made. No sign came from the Golden Feet. The Lord of Many White Elephants viewed the early successes of the foreigners with comparative unconcern. Soon, he believed, with the development of the wet monsoon's greatest intensity, his generals cholera and fever would put a different complexion upon affairs. Then, when his enemies were decimated by disease, his invincible armies would drive them into the sea.

Lord Dalhousie was quite aware of the climatic difficulties; so he decided that the operations should be renewed in the winter. Meanwhile preparations were to be made for an advance to Amarapur. He himself visited Rangoon towards the end of July for the purpose of arranging personally the plans of those contemplated operations. Personal acquaintance with the theatre of war convinced the Governor-General that it was better to restrict future military operations to the 'complete subjection' of the province of Pegu. Prome was captured in October. The city of Pegu was recaptured in November. The war practically came to an end in December.

A detailed account of the military and naval operations which culminated in British victory may be reconstructed from the official records of the British Government, but no reliable Burmese account of the war is available. So we are compelled to survey the operations from the standpoint of one of the parties alone. But it is not altogether impossible to draw from the British records a picture, however unsatisfactory, of the state of things behind the Burmese lines. Their stockades were strong; their artillery was not negli-

gible. Still they fled at the sight of the invaders. They failed even to take adequate advantage of the geographical and climatic difficulties. Probably their fundamental weakness lay in bad leadership and lack of co-ordination. It was impossible for the average Burmese soldier to save his country from the folly of his rulers and the determined and well-organised pressure of his enemies.

ANNEXATION OF PEGU

The question of territorial expansion in Burma was naturally discussed by Lord Dalhousie on the eve of the war. On 21 February 1852, he wrote to a friend in England that if the Burmese hurried their Government into war, they would 'lose the maritime Kingdom of Pegu, or perhaps the whole, white elephants included.' Officially, however, he recorded the view 'that conquest in Burma would be a calamity second only to the calamity of war.' The progress of the war compelled him to adopt a different attitude. On 27 June 1852, he wrote in a private letter that the heavy cost of war on the British side would compel the Government of India to demand cession of territory. Three days later he wrote a Minute explaining the arguments in favour of the annexation of Pegu. If the British Government withdrew its army from Burma, 'exacting nothing, retaining nothing,' the Burmese Court would interpret this moderation as a sign of weakness. If only the ports of Martaban, Rangoon and Bassein were annexed, the expenses for the defence of these outposts would be very heavy and 'no local income would be derived to meet the charge.' So the Governor-General concluded that the entire province of Pegu, extending somewhat above Prome, might be annexed. On all sides except the north this province was bounded by natural barriers or British territories. Its climate was excellent, its soil was fertile, and it contained valuable forests of teak. Its possession would strengthen the British hold on the sea, 'with its trade.' Financially the province was not likely to be a burden on the Government of India. Finally, it was expected that the local population—the Mons or Taluings who were eager to escape from 'the cruel tyranny of the Burman rule'—would welcome the establishment of British rule.

The Court of Directors accepted the Governor-General's recommendation but put him into trouble by insisting that Pegu should not be annexed 'without bringing the war to a conclusion, either by a treaty with the King of Ava, of which that cession should be the basis (*sine qua non*), or by the entire subjugation of that Power.' Lord Dalhousie knew that it was impossible to secure 'the entire subjugation of that Power' without sending an expedition to Upper Burma, and there were serious military arguments against the adoption of such a campaign. As regards the conclusion of a treaty with the Burmese King, Lord Dalhousie regarded it as 'an evil to be avoided.' He was convinced that no Burmese Government would scrupulously adhere to its treaty obligations; so the British Government would be 'reduced to the necessity, either of interfering upon every occasion on which a faithless and overbearing Power disregards the stipulated rights of our subjects, or of avoiding the perpetual risk of quarrel by overlooking such disregard of our subjects' rights and neglecting to enforce them.'

But in obedience to the instructions of the Court of Directors he tried his best to procure a treaty. On 16 November 1852, he wrote a letter to the King of Burma, asking him to recognise the annexation of Pegu. A draft of the treaty which the Governor-General wanted the Burmese Government to sign was enclosed. Article 1 provided for 'perpetual peace and friendship' between the two States. Article 2 confirmed the cession of Pegu. Article 3 bound each Government to 'permit the subjects of the other to carry on trade within their respective dominions.' Captain Phayre was selected as Commissioner of Pegu, and he was instructed to determine the boundary of the new province 'with reference to joint considerations of a military and political character.' He arrived at Rangoon on 19 December 1852, and issued the Proclamation of annexation on the next day. The inhabitants of Pegu were asked 'to submit themselves to the authority, and to confide securely in the protection, of the British Government, whose power they have seen to be irresistible, and whose rule is marked by justice and beneficence.'

The war was over, the province of Pegu was occupied, but

the desired treaty was as far as ever. Meanwhile a palace revolution had overwhelmed the Court of Ava. King Pagan had a half-brother named Mindon, who had throughout opposed the war. His popularity was increased by the Burmese disasters in the war. In December 1852, he organised a rebellion, and in February 1853, he occupied the capital. Even before his accession to the throne he had revealed his anxiety to come to terms with the British authorities. In January 1853, he sent two Italian missionaries, Father Domingo Tarolly and Father Paulo Abbona, to see Captain Phayre with a friendly letter. After Mindon's accession Father Domingo Tarolly again saw Captain Phayre and enquired whether the annexation of Pegu could be revoked. He was told that it was 'irrevocable.' In March 1853, three Burmese officers saw Captain Phayre with a view to conclude a treaty. Although they were received with 'every mark of distinction,' they were extremely disappointed to find that the annexation of Pegu was really 'irrevocable.' They pathetically admitted that the Burmese Government was responsible for the war, 'that they had not a finger's point to urge in defence—all they asked for was generous consideration—that to deprive them of so much country was to leave them without an abode—that they asked for help—they were like children left without parents—that the present King had always opposed the war and asked for consideration, and so on.' When they found that their entreaties were of no avail, they refused to sign a treaty recognising the annexation of Pegu, on the ground that they were authorised only to offer the expenses of the war. Then Captain Phayre broke off the negotiations, delivering to them a memorandum stating that the frontier of the British territory was fixed at six miles north of Meeaday. He wrote to the Governor-General, 'I believe the King, having just come to the throne after a revolution, is afraid to incur the odium of signing away the Lower Provinces of his kingdom. He may, however, silently acquiesce in our occupation and be ready to enter into a commercial treaty.'

This prophecy was a good one. After their return to Amarapur the Burmese envoys reported their proceedings to the King, who once more emphasised his desire for peace.

Orders were issued to Burmese frontier officials not to allow any attacks to be made on the British forces at Meeday and Toungoo. The English prisoners were liberated and foreign merchants allowed to leave the country, if they so desired. Lord Dalhousie observed, 'I accept the King's declaration, of course; for it is, to my mind, as good as any treaty. I have to add that I place no confidence in either the one or the other; and regard our only security to be an adequate military strength in Pegu.' In response to the King's request the Irrawaddy was opened to traders from Upper Burma, but due precautions were taken to see that their boats did not bring down large numbers of armed men. The Expeditionary Force was dissolved, but two divisions of the army remained in Burma.

Although *de facto* peace was restored, suspicions did not disappear. At Amarapur there was a violent anti-British party, led by an Arminenian and supported by the Kanoung Prince, the King's brother and Heir-Apparent, which was kept in check only by the King's moderation and good sense. There were excitable tempers on the British side too. The Rangoon and Calcutta press warned the Government of India of Burmese preparations to invade Pegu, and declared that the Court of Ava was giving secret encouragement to dacoit leaders whose lawless activities severely handicapped the British officers in their efforts to settle the administration of the newly conquered country. Even some British officers so far lost their balance as to give credence to the stories of Burmese hostile preparations that they received from their extremely untrustworthy spies. But Captain Phayre did not lose his head. He suggested the desirability of employing a confidential agent at Amarapur, whose reports 'would be invaluable in providing an antidote to the absurd and dangerous rumours that flowed in with such amazing persistence.' A reliable man was available—a British merchant named Thomas Spears, who had spent many years in Burma. During the years 1853-1861 he served as an 'unofficial' agent of the Government of India at the Burmese Court. So long as he remained at the Burmese capital 'practically all the intercourse between the British authorities and the Court of Ava passed, unofficially, but no less really, through his hands,

to the benefit of both sides. He paved the way for the re-establishment of the British Residency at Mandalay . . . in 1862.' His reports convinced Lord Dalhousie that there was, 'humanly speaking, no chance whatever of the renewal of war.'

The authorities in England still insisted on securing a treaty recognising the cession of Pegu. So Lord Dalhousie prepared a revised draft which was likely to be less objectionable to Mindon than the treaty offered to him in 1853. It provided for 'perpetual peace and friendship,' recognition of the annexation of Pegu and unrestricted commercial intercourse. The Burmese King sent an envoy to Calcutta. In December 1854, he saw the Governor-General and requested him to restore Pegu. Lord Dalhousie replied, 'So long as the sun shines . . . those territories will never be restored to the Kingdom of Ava.'

In 1855 Lord Dalhousie decided to send to Amarapur 'a return mission of a friendly nature.' Major Phayre was selected as 'sole envoy' and he was instructed to secure the King's consent to a treaty of amity in which no reference would be made to Pegu. Arriving at Amarapur in August 1855, he found that the King was quite friendly but obviously unwilling to enter into a formal treaty. Mindon was trying to send an envoy to France in order to enlist Napoleon III's sympathy and to seek for his intervention for the restoration of Pegu. Moreover, he hoped that many chances might arise to render a treaty avoidable. The Armenians told him that the Czar of Russia would soon send his invincible army which was then engaged in the Crimean War to conquer India. Exaggerated reports about the Santal insurrection in Bengal were circulated all over Burma. It was fondly believed that the Emperor of France would influence the Queen of England in favour of the Burmese. Finally, some articles published in the London newspapers were interpreted as showing that the demand for the restoration of Pegu was likely to meet with a more favourable hearing in England than in India.

Though King Mindon indulged in illusions, he was not a fool. Major Phayre wrote, 'The King is undoubtedly an extraordinary man for a Burman. For the first time since the present dynasty succeeded to the throne in 1752, perhaps

in their whole history, the sovereign of Burma is mild in temper, easy of access, hears everything himself, is heartily desirous that his subjects shall not be oppressed, and strives to secure their happiness. There can be no doubt of his personal popularity. The people speak in terms of admiration of his good qualities, and openly say they never had a king so just and so beneficent. . . . He is too sagacious to suppose he can stand against us, and as long as he lasts no doubt peace will be preserved. Still he does not cease to hanker after the province he has lost and to listen eagerly to reports which hold out a chance, however vague or distant, of his being able one day to recover it by some unimagined disaster to British power.'

THE COMMERCIAL TREATY OF 1862

Under the directions of the Governor-General-in-Council, Mr. Richard Temple of the Civil Service and Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bruce visited British Burma in November-December 1860, for the purpose of conferring with Colonel Phayre upon administrative problems. The prospects of British trade in Burma naturally invited the careful consideration of these agents of the Government of India. They observed, ' . . . as yet no English merchants have established business at Ava ; but it appears probable, that if the King of Ava had acceded to the treaty that some time ago was proposed to His Majesty by the British Government, there would, ere this, have arisen an English trade at Ava. It is certain that the Burmese are largely inclined to take British piece goods, and that, if only a treaty had existed, British enterprise would transport quantities of such goods to Ava.' With reference to the employment of European capital in British Burma, Mr. Temple and Colonel Bruce added that ' the want of a more complete law respecting the relations between employer and labourer is frequently mentioned ; in places where labourers have to be hired and brought from distant districts at great expense, this matter becomes one of consequence.'

Another obstacle to the extension of British trade to Burma was the system of royal monopoly. The Burmese Government used from time to time arbitrarily to set apart any

article of commerce, and to declare the trade in it, within Upper Burma, to be a royal monopoly. The effect of the declaration was to deter the private trader from purchasing direct from the producer any of the reserved articles. He was compelled to buy from the Government agents to whom the producers were obliged to sell their goods at a fixed price. Under this system private traders were practically shut out, or were liable at any time to be shut out, from the extensive market of Upper Burma. Naturally the British merchants objected to it.

These commercial questions engaged the attention of Colonel Phayre, and in April 1862, he submitted to the Government of India an elaborate memorandum containing his suggestions. He proposed that he should be allowed to visit Mandalay 'to negotiate arrangements either by treaty or otherwise' regarding three pressing problems: the abolition or regulation of frontier customs; the opening of trade between Pegu and Yunan *via* Bhamo; and the immigration of Chinese labourers into British territory through Burma. He recommended the abolition of frontier customs 'apart altogether from the consideration of any return to be made by the Burmese,' because the pressure of taxation in Pegu was very heavy.

The Government of India authorised Colonel Phayre to open negotiations. He was required to secure the following five concessions:

(1) The Burmese Government would not increase the duties levied on English goods imported into or exported from Upper Burma.

(2) The caravan route to Yunan *via* Bhamo was to be re-opened by means of a joint British and Burmese Mission to the frontier.

(3) British merchants were to be allowed to go by that route, or to send their agents, and to place agents, European or Asiatic, at Bhamo, in order to attend to their trade.

(4) Chinese traders and labourers from Yunan were to be allowed to pass into British territory without hindrance.

(5) Opium was to be allowed to pass from British territories through Burma into Yunan either duty free or on payment of a moderate transit duty.

In return, the Government of India agreed to grant the following concessions to the Burmese Government :

(1) The sea-board duties on goods imported into Rangoon for export to Burmese territory were to be reduced.

(2) The land and river duties imposed on the English side of the frontier were to be abolished.

(3) Permission would be granted to the Burmese Government to import arms and warlike stores by the Irrawaddy.

With these instructions Colonel Phayre left Rangoon on 16 September and reached Mandalay on 8 October 1862. A preliminary agreement was reached through informal negotiations conducted on behalf of the King by Bishop Bigandet, a Frenchman and Chief of the Catholic Mission in Burma. Colonel Phayre was then received in public by the King on 16 October. The King wavered for a few days and finally objected to two articles in the proposed treaty. He could not at once bind himself not to increase the frontier duties, and he could not allow, owing to religious scruples, the importation of opium into China through his territory. The discussions came to a satisfactory conclusion early in November, and the treaty was signed.

It contained nine articles. Article 1 provided for the continuation of the existing friendship between the British and Burmese Governments. Article 2 provided for the protection of Burmese subjects, specially traders, who might proceed to British territory for commercial purposes. Article 3 provided for similar protection to British traders in Burmese territory. This article was proposed by the Burmese themselves. Article 4 provided for the regulation of duties on sea-borne goods meant for importation into Burmese territory. Such goods were to pay at Rangoon one per cent. (the regular duty being $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.) on their value, and might be conveyed through the Burmese territory to other countries free of duty. The Burmese were at liberty to put an internal or municipal duty on goods sold in their cities ; at that time they were not prepared to give up all taxes on consumers. Article 5 provided that goods imported into Burma from China for export to Rangoon would pay a duty of one per cent. to the Burmese Government. By Article 6 Burmese merchants were allowed to come to, and travel in, British

territory. Article 7 authorised British merchants to proceed up the Irrawaddy into Burmese territory 'in such manner as they please without hindrance,' to 'purchase whatever they may require' and to 'settle in any part of the Burmese territory.' Although the King objected to the mention of the word 'steamer' in the treaty on the ground that his people would be alarmed, he was 'fully prepared under this article for the appearance of British steamers in the Irrawaddy and for our merchants to settle at Bhamo.' Thus the road to China was fairly opened to British steamers as far as they could go, and British merchants could deal at Bhamo with Chinese caravans. Article 8 provided that the British Government might abolish within one year the duties imposed on the Burmese frontier. The provision was made optional, because King Mindon refused to abolish the duties imposed on the Burmese side of the frontier at once, although he declared that they would be abolished as soon as possible. Article 9 provided for people passing through the Burmese territory to the British territory without hindrance. Colonel Phayre wrote, 'Should tea planters of Assam, therefore, wish to import Chinese labourers, they have only to send an agent to Bhamo and no doubt they will be able to engage many.' He justly claimed that the treaty was 'highly-favourable to British interests.'

The Government of India expected that the Burmese would insist on permission being granted for the importation of arms and warlike stores through British territory. Colonel Phayre was rather surprised to find that the Burmese Ministers did not mention the subject at all. He wrote, 'The fact is there is a manufactory for small arms at Mandalay under the direction of a Frenchman, a good practical engineer and founder. I visited the place. He has turned out very fair rifles, makes percussion caps and manufactures gun-powder. The Burmese Government do not, therefore, feel anxious on the subject of warlike stores.'

The Government of India came to the resolution that the terms secured by the treaty were 'as favourable as could have been hoped for.' Colonel Phayre was asked to 'deal liberally with the Burmese Government in the interpretation of the treaty.' At the same time it was considered necessary

misunderstandings from arising between British subjects and to appoint a British Agent at Mandalay 'in order to prevent the Burmese authorities . . . and to allay them when they arise.' The following Agents held office in succession: Dr. Williams (1862-1864), Captain (later Sir Edward) Sladen (1864-1869), Major MacMahon (1869-1872), Captain Strover (1872-1875), Colonel Duncan (1875-1878), Mr. Shaw (1878-1879), Colonel Browne (1879), Mr. St. Barbe (1879).

THE COMMERCIAL TREATY OF 1867

We have already seen that in 1862 King Mindon assured Colonel Phayre of his desire to abolish the duties levied by his Government on the Anglo-Burmese frontier, although he declined to give immediate effect to the proposal. After his appointment at Mandalay, Captain Sladen repeatedly brought the matter before the Burmese Ministers, but frontier duties continued to be levied in Burmese territory. The Ministers plainly told him that they were 'as anxious as the English to do away with export and import duties, but that the Government was too poor to give up a present certain item of revenue until it could see its way to some corresponding equivalent.' Whatever might have been the reasons behind the obstinate refusal of the Burmese to abolish the frontier duties, they could not be accused of repudiating the treaty of 1862. The Chief Commissioner admitted in a letter to the Government of India that 'as the frontier duties on the British side were not abolished until June, 1863, the Burmese might, under the spirit of Article 8 of the treaty, be allowed until June, 1867, to come to a final conclusion.' Colonel Phayre's term of office as Chief Commissioner was coming to a close, and he wanted, before leaving Burma, to bring to a satisfactory conclusion the negotiations concerning the frontier duties. He went to Mandalay in November 1866. The negotiations broke off on the question of monopolies. His chief aim was 'to fix the articles that would not be monopolised, so that . . . merchants might know they would be purchasable in open market.' The King refused to restrict his commercial privileges, and no treaty was signed.

Soon afterwards Colonel Phayre left Burma. His successor, Colonel Fytche, at once took up the question of monopolies.

He was warmly supported by the Government of India. The Governor-General himself wrote a letter to the King of Burma requesting him 'to relax and ultimately to remove altogether the royal monopolies' which paralysed commercial intercourse between British and Burmese territories. When this letter reached Mandalay, Upper Burma was in the grip of a rebellion and a famine. The King could not but adopt a conciliatory attitude. He issued a proclamation reducing the frontier duties, both export and import, to 5 per cent. *ad valorem* and abolishing monopolies (with some exceptions).

The question of concluding a new treaty could now be conveniently taken up. Colonel Fytche went to Mandalay and signed a treaty in October 1867. He observed, 'Its terms, which provide for greater freedom in the trade of the two countries and greater security for British interests in the Burmese territory, are eminently calculated to develop the commercial relations of the two nations.' The Government of India regarded the treaty as 'highly satisfactory, and calculated to promote the prosperity of both countries.'

Before the conclusion of the treaty a proposal was initiated by the Government of India, and opposed by Colonel Fytche, that a provision binding the Burmese King to communicate with foreign powers through the British Government alone should be inserted in the treaty. In pursuance of instructions from Calcutta Colonel Fytche asked Captain Sladen to secure the consent of the King, if possible, but to 'refrain from the subject' if he found it 'distasteful to His Majesty.' There is nothing in the documents to reveal what efforts, if any, were made by Captain Sladen to secure the consent of the King to this proposal. The fact that no provision embodying it was included in the treaty is rather significant. In his letter dated 15 February 1868, the Secretary of State observed, 'In abstaining from pressing upon the Burmese Government the insertion in the treaty of an article limiting the King's intercourse with other European States to communications with them made through the representatives of the British Government, your Excellency acted wisely. The imposition of such a restriction would have been offensive to the King and the probable evasion of it at some future time might, in such a case, lead to complications of a very inconve-

nient character.'

The treaty is thoroughly commercial in character, but it contains one important provision of political significance. Article 5 authorised the British Government 'to establish a Resident or Political Agent in Burmese territory.' The Agent was invested with final jurisdiction in all civil suits between registered British subjects at the capital (of the King). He was also authorised to decide, in co-operation with a Burmese officer of rank, all civil cases between Burmese subjects and registered British subjects.

Captain Sladen was, however, not in a hurry to bring this court into existence. He thought that 'it required time, as well as much preliminary intercourse with the several members of the Burmese Government, to determine the details of the new court, more especially with reference to the settlement of certain anomalies in procedure which would have to be provided for in the trial of mixed suits.' In March 1869, he requested the Burmese Government to consider certain proposals framed by him, to appoint an officer to sit with him in the trial of mixed suits, and to lend him the services of a Burmese bailiff and six Burmese court peons. Captain Sladen's proposals were approved and Mr. Manook, who held the office of *Kullawon* (Magistrate over foreigners), was appointed to sit with him in the trial of mixed suits.

It was soon discovered, however, that the Ministers were not as conciliatory as the King. They were prepared to allow the Political Agent to try cases in his own house, but they were 'positively averse' to the establishment of a British Court in the King's dominions. They looked upon the establishment of such a court at the capital as a step directed against the absolute sovereignty of the King. Captain Sladen declared that 'unless the court could be established as a court and conducted with all the dignity and respect to which a British court was everywhere entitled,' he would not consent to try cases at all. The King was as conciliatory as before, but he did not venture to overrule his Ministers. In course of negotiations and conferences Captain Sladen found that the real motive of the Ministers was 'to make the Political Agent's court subject and subservient in all respects to the courts of the country.' That position he

steadily refused to accept. At last an agreement was concluded. The Burmese Government allowed the establishment of a British Political Agent's Court at Mandalay for the trial of all suits between registered British subjects. It was also agreed that a mixed court would be held for the trial of suits in which both British and Burmese subjects were involved. The Political Agent's court was formally opened on 2 August 1869.

The court generally worked well, but there were occasional difficulties. Captain Strover found himself in an anomalous position in executing some decrees issued by the mixed court. The Burmese law did not admit of attachment of property; so British subjects considered themselves at a disadvantage in the mixed court. Mr. Manook's decisions in certain cases were not liked by one of the Queens; so he was transferred. His successor, a Burmese officer, was under the absolute control of the Ministers. Decrees remained unexecuted, and the Ministers tried 'to retard the efficient working of the mixed court.'

In this connection we may refer to the attitude adopted by the Government of Burma towards the extradition of British subjects who escaped to Burmese territory after committing crimes within British territory. Although the Ministers did not object to extradition in principle, they claimed that a British subject acquired Burmese nationality if he lived in Upper Burma for some years. Captain Strover argued that all persons resident in Lower Burma at the time of annexation were British subjects and they could not divest themselves of that character by 'an unsettled residence in a foreign state.' When the matter was referred to the Government Advocate at Rangoon, he observed that all persons who were resident in Lower Burma at the time of annexation reverted to Burmese nationality as soon as they returned to Upper Burma, while immigrants from Upper Burma who lived for some time in Lower Burma and returned to Burmese territory became subjects of the Burmese King. With this view the Chief Commissioner refused to agree. He thought that all Burmese residents of Pegu became British subjects 'by conquest,' although he agreed that 'some hardship' was involved in the case of the Burmese who at first settled

in British territory and after a residence of some years went to Upper Burma. The Government of India decided that habitual residence should be considered as *prima facie* evidence of domicile. The burden of proof was to be imposed upon the person who asserted that he was not a subject of the country where his home was situated.

By Article 1 of the treaty of 1867 King Mindon agreed to surrender his right of monopoly in all articles except earth oil, timber and precious stones. This arrangement seriously affected his financial position. In July 1873, the Political Agent at Mandalay reported that the King was 'in want of money.' Under these circumstances it was not unnatural for him to evade the obligation which he had almost unwillingly accepted. Moreover, the Burmese version of the treaty gave him some latitude in the matter. On 15 August 1881, the Chief Commissioner wrote to the Government of India, 'The Burmese version of the treaty, which is to be treated as the original, is less clear against monopolies than the English version.'

In 1871 the Political Agent at Mandalay suspected that the King intended to revive the monopoly system. He at once protested against this, and the King gave way. Yet financial stringency compelled him to monopolise timber and his officers established a system of indirect monopoly all over his dominions. The Government of India found it difficult to take formal exception to the King's procedure, for there was no open violation of treaty obligations. In a despatch from the Government of India to the Secretary of State, dated 7 March 1879, we find a lucid statement of the British point of view. The Secretary of State was informed that the intention of the Government of India to abolish the monopoly system in Upper Burma was defeated 'by the unjustifiable conduct of the late King (Mindon) who found means to evade fulfilling the object and substantial obligation of the treaty (of 1867) without any positive infraction of the letter. Although no articles other than those sanctioned by the treaty were declared to be royal monopolies, and although the King used to assert that every trader was at liberty to buy whatever he wanted, the fact really was that all purchases had to be made from the King himself, or from his authorised

agents. The King was by far the largest dealer in produce in his dominions, and, until his requirements were fully met, none of his subjects were in a position to transact business with private traders. Further, in the case of goods imported from British Burma into Upper Burma, the Rangoon merchants complained that pressure was brought to bear upon the independent dealers to induce them to sell goods to the royal brokers, from whom alone the King's subjects were permitted to purchase what they required. The tendency of these measures has been to reduce the entire trade in the staple commodities passing between Upper and British Burma to a close monopoly in the hands of the King and of the few merchants able to deal with him on his own terms. Under this system private traders are practically shut out, or are liable at any time to be shut out, from the market, for they are unable, with any degree of certainty, either to dispose of their imports from British Burma at the remunerative rates, or to purchase raw produce for export from Upper Burma to Rangoon.'

It was the 'shoe question' which finally brought about a breach between King Mindon and the Government of India. As mentioned earlier, it was customary for British officers, including the Chief Commissioner, to 'unshoe' at the steps of the audience hall whenever they were interviewed by the King. In 1876 the Government of India suddenly decided that it was not dignified for a British representative to kneel unshod at court. The Burmese Government was requested to receive British officers in a manner suitable to their high rank and 'more in conformity with the manner in which the King's representative was received by the Viceroy.' It was pointed out that the Burmese envoy, who had come to Calcutta to greet the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visit to India, was received by the Viceroy with his hats and shoes and was permitted to sit on a chair 'in the same manner as His Excellency himself.' But King Mindon 'declined on his side to abate any part of the ceremonial procedure.' He declared that he would, if necessary, fight for ceremony although he had not fought for Pegu. The result was a stalemate. The Political Agent was no longer received by the King. This suspension of direct personal

intercourse was naturally detrimental to British influence in the Burmese Court.

During the last two years of his life (1876-1878) King Mindon refrained from official intercourse with the British Agent at Mandalay but took no positive step likely to widen the breach between himself and the British authorities. His moderate temperament, as well as his long experience of British diplomacy, led him to adopt the policy of sitting on the fence. It was left for his unfortunate successor to give mortal offence to the British mercantile community and thereby to lose his throne.

ACCESSION OF THIBAW

In September 1878, King Mindon lay seriously ill, and the Government of India apprehended that his death would be followed by internal dissensions and a war of succession in Upper Burma. The Chief Commissioner of British Burma was authorised to take precautions 'for the protection of the Mandalay Residency and of British subjects, in the event of an outbreak in the capital.' Fortunately, however, no untoward incident took place. Thibaw, 'the youngest of the four principal sons of the King,' was declared Heir-Apparent by the Burmese Ministers, and congratulated by the British Resident. This prince was 'the only son of royal blood on both sides' and 'the favourite of his father.'—He was about twenty years of age, and he had 'taken a high degree in examination.' On 1 October 1878, authentic intelligence of King Mindon's death was received by the Resident. Thibaw's succession took place without opposition.

A young prince of twenty, without any administrative experience or political training, was not likely to be able to proceed successfully through the web of British diplomacy. Lord Lytton, remembered to this day as an uncompromising champion of 'Forward Policy' on the north-west, did not like to waste his opportunities in the north-east. As soon as he heard of the old King's death he telegraphically authorised the British Resident at Mandalay 'to intimate to Ministers that general recognition and support of the Heir-Apparent by the Government of India will be proportioned in degree to his adoption of a new policy towards British Govern-

ment, especially regarding free access to King, and greater consideration for position and influence of Resident.' The implications of this new policy were more clearly explained in a letter to Lord Cranbrook, the Secretary of State, dated 17 October 1878. Arguing that 'the opportunity afforded by the King's accession should give a favourable opportunity for improving our relations with his Government,' Lord Lytton and his colleagues observed, 'The interests of our Government in that country are mainly commercial, but they are of large and growing importance; and they are affected by the insecurity of life and property which still prevails at Mandalay, by the difficulty and delays which are opposed to applications for injuries or redress, and by the disregard, on the part of the late King of Burma, of existing treaties. Neither the grievances of British subjects in Upper Burma, nor the evasion of public engagements, have hitherto been pressed to a formal issue with the Burmese Government; and we believe that the time has now come for adopting a different mode of dealing with such questions.'

That Lord Lytton was determined to 'press to a formal issue' the grievances of British subjects in Upper Burma, was proved within a few days of the new King's accession. Sometime before the old King's death three British subjects, two *dhobies* (washermen) and an Englishman, were maltreated by Burmese officers. The Resident invited the attention of the Burmese Minister for Foreign Affairs to these incidents. Lord Lytton telegraphically instructed the Resident 'to press firmly for proper amends, and satisfactory assurances for the future,' and 'to intimate to Burmese Government that their reply and acts in this matter will be regarded as testing disposition of new King toward British Government.' The Burmese Government punished the officers concerned and Lord Lytton observed that the redress was satisfactory. In another case, however, where some passengers on board a British steamer were unjustly arrested by a gang sent by a Burmese officer, no satisfactory redress was available.

Before this question could be finally settled, the Government of India received official reports from the Resident at Mandalay to the effect that the 'late King's sons, with mothers, wives, and children' had been slaughtered in prison

by order of the new King. Lord Lytton at once ordered the Resident 'to deliver to King forcible remonstrance against these barbarities, and to intimate that such conduct raises question of British Resident remaining at Capital.' The Secretary of State approved the remonstrance, but added that the withdrawal of the Resident 'might give further scope to his cruelty and bad government.' Sometime later detailed information about the massacre reached Calcutta. The following extract from the confidential diary of the Resident at Mandalay, dated 18 February 1879, gives a vivid account of the tragedy: ' . . . on Saturday night (15 February 1879) the removal of the political prisoners to the jail (which had been cleared for them) commenced. Some were killed on that night and the rest on the two succeeding nights. A large hole had been dug in the jail precincts. Into this their bodies were thrown. Touching tales are told of how the women and children pleaded for their lives in vain. Their outcries were stifled by the hands of the executioners grasping their necks till they were strangled. Others were killed with bludgeons, which in the hands of half-drunken men often required to be used repeatedly before the victims were put out of their pain. The executioners were some of the worst ruffians released for the purpose from the jail which was now the scene of their cruelties. . . . On Sunday night eight cartloads of the bodies of the princes of the blood are said to have been conveyed out of the city by the western (or funeral) gate, and thrown into the river according to the custom. The other bodies were all thrown into the hole already dug in the jail. No conspiracy or other provocation to such a deed has been reported. The present Ministers are said to have tried to dissuade the King, but in vain. . . . The King's mother is said to have urged the King to it, but chiefly a violent military Chief lately promoted to be an *Atwen Wun* or Privy Councillor, and a great favourite of the King.' On 20 February 1879, the Resident noted in his diary: 'Infants were taken from their mothers' arms and their brains were dashed out against the wall. Others were struck on the head and thrown only half-dead on to the heap of bodies in the pit. The queens and princesses were stripped in order to search their clothes for secreted jewels. Some,

is said, were dishonoured before being killed, though this is perhaps untrue. All was effected under the superintendence of the personal followers of the King. No official of the *Hlutdaw* or Ministers' Court was present.

In his reply to the Resident's letter of remonstrance the Burmese Foreign Minister asserted the customary right of the King of Burma, as an independent Sovereign, 'to take such measures to prevent disturbance in his country as might be desirable, without regard to the blame of others.' The Resident again wrote to the Minister, asking the King to save the lives of 'the Queen and Princesses; the widows and female relatives and others, the servants of His late Majesty, and the relatives and servants also of His Majesty the present King.' He also requested the Minister to hand over to 'him any such from whom disturbance to the State may be feared, and agreed to 'convey them out of reach of harm-doing.' The Minister replied, 'It is not desired to clear away (*i.e.*, to kill) and keep-by (*i.e.*, imprison) those who it is not feared would cause any disturbance to the country, but the wish towards them is that they may live happily and contentedly.'

Behind this apparently friendly exchange of letters a conspiracy was probably being organised to attack the Resident. The Resident got scent of it and reported the matter to the Chief Commissioner, who communicated with Calcutta. As a result, the Viceroy authorised the Resident to withdraw from Mandalay whenever he thought this course expedient for his personal safety. Matters were apparently heading towards a crisis at Thibaw's capital. The Assistant Resident was insulted in the streets. The common people adopted a hostile attitude to Englishmen in general. The King collected troops and indulged in 'warlike and blustering talk.' But the Viceroy was not convinced that he really meant war. A few months later, however, the Residency seemed to be in real danger. So in October 1879, the Residency was withdrawn and all Englishmen living at Mandalay left for Rangoon.

The departure of the British Resident made no change in Burmese policy. A Burmese envoy came to Taayet-myo and opened negotiations for the conclusion of a new treaty. From the British point of view the following proposals were spe-

cially open to objection : (1) the Agent of each state to have jurisdiction in civil suits between subjects of his own Government residing in the territories of the other ; (2) the subjects of each party residing in the territories of the other to be subject to the territorial criminal law and jurisdiction ; (3) mutual surrender of political offenders ; (4) imposition of heavy charges on merchant vessels entering or leaving Upper Burma ; (5) the Burmese Government to have the right of procuring unlimited war material. The Chief Commissioner refused to take these proposals seriously. Meanwhile complaints from the suffering British subjects in Upper Burma continued to reach Rangoon. On 9 November 1880, the Government of India wrote to the Secretary of State, ' We are of opinion that we should be justified by the misconduct of the Burmese in withdrawing from engagements the maintenance of which is no longer binding upon us or advantageous to our interests ; and we desire again to request from Her Majesty's Government authority to withdraw from these engagements. . . . ' But the Secretary of State asked the Government of India to ' maintain for the present the attitude of forbearance lately observed towards the King. '

COMMERCIAL QUESTIONS

The revival of monopolies by the Burmese Ministers further complicated the situation. In forwarding the complaints of the British subjects living in Upper Burma against the Burmese Government, the Chief Commissioner remarked that the revival of monopolies would seriously injure not only the commercial community, but the people at large. He was, however, not quite sure whether he could appeal to the treaty of 1867 in justification of his claim for the abolition of monopolies. He discussed the various measures suggested from different quarters as likely to be useful in inducing the Burmese Government to abolish the monopolies : (1) despatch of a diplomatic mission to press for observance of the treaty ; (2) cancellation of the treaty ; (3) threat of forcible intervention to compel observance of the treaty. None of these measures appeared to him as reasonable. To him ' the wisest course ' appeared to be ' to remonstrate against breaches of the treaty, with such vigour as may be possible. ' This

suggestion was approved by the Government of India, and as a result of the Chief Commissioner's strong remonstrances, all monopolies were abolished in February 1882.

This conciliatory step was followed by the despatch of a Burmese mission to Simla in April 1882, to conduct negotiations for the purpose of revising the existing treaties between the two Governments. The principal aim of the Government of India was the re-establishment of a British Resident at Mandalay. The Burmese envoys, however, produced a draft closely resembling the sketch of a treaty which had been rejected in 1880. Some of the provisions were : (1) creation of fresh monopolies ; (2) increase of the existing 5 per cent. duties to 10 per cent. ; (3) introduction of an elaborate system of passports for British subjects ; (4) heavy tonnage duties on British ships entering Upper Burma ; (5) restriction of armaments on British ships ; (6) registration of British subjects in Upper Burma ; (7) extradition of political offenders. Apart from these provisions, which were totally unacceptable to the British authorities, the treaty was drawn, not as between the Indian and Upper Burmese Governments, but as between the Burmese King and the Queen-Empress, and provided for the permanent representation of the former at the British Court. 'The effect,' observed the Government of India, 'would have been to take out of our hands the control of diplomatic relations between British India and Upper Burma and to provide for their being conducted on the other side of the globe.' When the Burmese envoys found that their draft was totally unacceptable to the Government of India, they made some commercial concessions (continuation of the existing 5 per cent. duties and reduction of monopolies) ; but they clearly indicated that the points to which they attached most importance were the privilege of treating directly with the Queen-Empress, the right of free importation of arms, and British co-operation in preventing armed attempts against the King's authority. After elaborate discussions it was finally decided that there should be two treaties—one a business treaty with the Government of India, the other a brief treaty with the Queen, providing merely for friendly relations. Two draft treaties were accordingly prepared and placed in the hands of the Burmese envoys. Before the treaties could be

signed, they were asked by their Government to return to Mandalay. They left Simla on 31 August 1882.

On 21 December 1882, the Chief Commissioner received from Mandalay two draft treaties, one between the Queen-Empress and King Thibaw, another between the King and the Viceroy. The second treaty differed from the draft treaty of July in several points. The position of the Resident and the site and protection of the Residency were inadequately treated. Liberty for British subjects to trade and travel was not sufficiently provided. Free trade in cattle was restricted and the tea monopoly was retained. The surrender of political offenders was provided for. The treaty of Yandabo was declared to be void. These terms could not be accepted by the British authorities. Both the drafts were rejected by the Government of India, and in this rejection Lord Kimberley, the new Secretary of State, concurred.

FOREIGN POLICY OF THIBAW

It is necessary at this stage to turn to the story of King Thibaw's attempts to establish friendly relations with the French Republic. Here he was merely following the precedent established by his father : King Mindon had concluded a treaty with France in 1873. In July 1878, a Burmese envoy sent by King Mindon arrived in Paris. The incident at once attracted the notice of Lord Lyons, who was then British Ambassador in Paris. He requested Mr. Waddington, Foreign Minister of France, not to allow Burmese agents to purchase arms in France. Mr. Waddington enquired whether England would take exception to any diplomatic Mission from Burma being received officially by the French Government. Lord Lyons answered that no objection would be raised to the simple reception of such a Mission ; but he added, ' considering the geographical situation of Burma, and its political relations with British India, Her Majesty's Government no doubt object to any special alliance or understanding between the Burmese Government and any other power.' In this case Lord Lyons was pushing British claims further than the Government of India then desired to do. On 7 March 1879, the Government of India (then presided over by so strong an imperialist as Lord Lytton) observed in a despatch to the

Secretary of State, 'The external relations of the Mandalay Court with other States besides India are, for the present, of minor concern to us.'

In May 1883, the Court of Ava sent four high officers of state to visit Europe for the purpose of gathering information relating to industrial arts and sciences. They were accompanied from Mandalay by a French gentleman named M. de Trevelec. The Mission arrived in Paris in August. It was reported by the British Embassy in Paris that the Burmese envoy 'seemed to desire to renew, with some alterations apparently, the treaty which France had made with Burma in 1873, but which had never yet been ratified.' The French Foreign Office was informed that 'in consequence of its vicinity to British India, and of its political relations with that Empire, Burma occupied a peculiar position with regard to Her Majesty's Government, and one which gave them a special interest in all that concerned it.' On 5 April 1884, M. Jules Ferry, the Foreign Minister of France, received the Burmese envoys and, in response to the demand of the French Government, they affixed their signature to the unratified commercial treaty of 1873. Lord Lyons spoke about the matter to M. Jules Ferry and invited his attention to 'the serious objections which could not but be entertained by His Majesty's Government to any special alliance or political understanding between Burma and any other Power.' The French Minister assured him that any treaties or conventions which might be concluded between France and Burma would be 'entirely of a commercial or consular character' and would not give the Burmese any facilities for obtaining arms.

In June 1884, Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for India, invited the attention of the British Foreign Secretary, Earl Granville, to Article 3 of the Franco-Burmese Treaty of 1873, renewed in April 1884, which provided for the reciprocal appointment of diplomatic agents by the two contracting parties. It was suggested that Lord Lyons should try to obtain from the French Government a promise that the functions of any agent who might be appointed under the provisions of that Article would be only of a commercial character. Instructions to this effect were sent by Earl Granville to Lord Lyons, who thereupon spoke to M. Jules Ferry and

demanded a promise. The French Minister replied that it was very difficult to draw a distinct line between commercial and political functions; whatever might be the title used by the French agent in Upper Burma, he would in practice have charge of French interests in general. M. Jules Ferry also asked if there were any special treaty engagements between England and Burma which precluded the Burmese from entering into independent political relations with other Powers. Unable to give a direct reply to this significant question, Lord Lyons merely repeated the old plea of 'special circumstances' and 'preponderating British interests' and requested that his demand might be considered by the French Government 'promptly and in a friendly spirit.' M. Jules Ferry then referred to some of the difficulties raised by the Burmese envoys. They resisted the proposal for the establishment of a system like that of the capitulations under which Frenchmen living in Burma would be placed under the exclusive jurisdiction of French Consuls. They wanted that the French agents should take off their shoes on approaching, not only the King, but even functionaries of smaller rank. They wanted facilities for procuring arms. On these points the French Government was not disposed to make any concession. Sometime later M. Jules Ferry assured Lord Lyons that 'France did not contemplate making any special political alliance with Burma.' The Burmese, he said, 'desired to throw themselves into the arms of France, but the French Government were determined not to accept any offers of this kind. They had no intention of forming with Burma an alliance defensive and offensive, or any alliance whatever of a special character. All they desired was to establish friendly intercourse and commercial relations on a proper basis. There were no secret communications going on.'

A Franco-Burmese treaty was signed in Paris on 15 January 1885, and ratified on 25 November 1885. It contained twenty-one Articles. Article 1 provided for 'lasting peace, perpetual friendship, and full and complete liberty of commercial navigation' between the two States. Articles 2-4 secured 'most-favoured-nation' rights to Frenchmen in Burma. By Article 5 the Burmese Government bound itself 'not to create monopolies, nor to authorise, directly or indirectly, their imposi-

tion on any article of commerce other than tea, intended for consumption in the fresh state.' Article 6 provided that the duties in Burma would not exceed 5 per cent. *ad valorem* before 1 April 1895. Articles 7-17 contained detailed provisions about trade, navigation, jurisdiction, etc. Article 18 provided that each State would punish according to its own laws those amongst its subjects who might have returned to its territory after committing certain serious crimes in the territory of the other party. Article 19 provided for the extradition of criminals accused of certain serious crimes. It is significant that the French Government failed to obtain consular jurisdiction over Frenchmen in Burma. The treaty did not contain any political or military stipulations.

Although Lord Lyons could not take any exception to the specific provisions of the treaty, he was convinced that the real object of the Burmese, 'in forming relation with European Powers, has been and is to find means of emancipating themselves from the special influence and control of the Indian Government.' Although the French Government had rejected the Burmese offer of 'throwing themselves into the arms of France,' Lord Lyons thought that, in future, the Burmese would continue to act in the same spirit, and the progress of French power to the east of Burma would induce the French Government to attach more importance to their overtures.

After the conclusion of the treaty with France the Burmese envoys went to Rome to obtain certain necessary alterations in King Mindon's commercial treaty with Italy. They were received by the King and attended a dinner given by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in honour of the King's birthday. It appears, however, that they remained in Rome for too brief a period to be able to conclude the negotiations. It was reported that the Italian Government desired to conclude a supplementary convention, but this project did not materialise. The Italian Government wanted the 'most-favoured-nation' clause, but the Burmese envoys only agreed to accept it for one year.

During their residence in Rome the Burmese envoys entered into negotiations with the German Ambassador in Italy, who had received orders to conclude a German-Burmese commer-

cial treaty in the name of his Government. The treaty finally concluded secured for Germany the 'most-favoured-nation' clause, and contained nothing which could prejudice British interests.

FALL OF THIBAW

In October 1884, a public meeting held in Rangoon recommended that Upper Burma should be annexed or 'it should be placed in the position of a protected state within the Empire, with a Prince, other than the present ruler, on the throne.' In reporting to the Government of India the resolutions adopted at the meeting, the Chief Commissioner remarked that they embodied 'the sincere views and convictions of the majority of Englishmen in Rangoon,' although he expressed his dissent from the resolution in favour of annexation. The public meeting was followed by a letter from the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce, in which it was argued that the importation of British goods into Upper Burma had fallen off greatly in consequence of Thibaw's misrule, and the Government was asked either to annex it or to put one of Thibaw's rival brothers on the throne. Complaints were received from the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company. The Government of India, however, authorised the Chief Commissioner to inform the memorialists that 'the circumstances . . . are not such as to call for the adoption of the strenuous measures advocated by them.' Even after this the British merchants in Burma tried to influence the authorities in England. In a letter dated 18 May 1885, to the London Chamber of Commerce, the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce suggested that Burma should be separated from India and constituted a colony governed directly from London. This letter was forwarded by the London Chamber of Commerce to the Secretary of State, Lord Randolph Churchill.

In March 1885, the Government of India came to know that Thibaw had granted the concession of certain ruby mines in Upper Burma to a French Company, Bonvillein & Co., for three lakhs a year. The British authorities naturally attached great importance to the general question of French endeavours to obtain privileges in Upper Burma. The British Ambassador in Paris tried to secure authentic information this

On 18 May 1885, *The Times* published a report stating that Thibaw was prepared to reduce import duty on French goods to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., while the duty on British goods remained 5 per cent. It was also reported that the French were constructing a railway in Upper Burma and founding a bank at Mandalay. Some Burmese documents showed that the King was really negotiating with France. These negotiations, if fruitful, would have given the French Government full control over the principal sources of revenue in Upper Burma, the navigation of the Irrawaddy, and the only route from the British ports to Western China. Documentary evidence was also available to show that the French Government was prepared to allow the transport of arms to Upper Burma through Tonquin. These revelations naturally filled the British authorities with serious misgivings. In July-August 1885, both the Chief Commissioner and the Viceroy were prepared for annexation.

Then came the famous case of the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation. This Company had been cutting timber for 20 years in forests leased from the King of Burma; the revenue it paid was so much per log worked out. A new lease was entered into on 19 October 1884, and the Company agreed to pay for the Ningyan forests in a lump sum revenue of four and a half lakhs per annum in advance. Reports were submitted to the King, accusing the Company of having bribed the Governor of Ningyan with Rs. 60,000 to connive at its depriving the King of his just revenue. This accusation was made by a former Governor of Ningyan, in order to get his successor into disgrace, and to secure his own re-appointment. Official pressure was exercised upon foresters employed by the Company to go to Mandalay and to give evidence in support of the accusation. The Company found it 'quite impossible' to prove its innocence. So, in April 1885, the Manager of the Company requested the Chief Commissioner to interfere in the matter. The Chief Commissioner requested the Burmese Foreign Minister to enquire into the matter. Unfortunately it was complicated by the interference of the French Consul at Mandalay, who asked the Burmese Government to find a plea to cancel the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation's forest lease and to confer it upon French mer-

Burma Trading Corporation was passed in the Chamber of Princes. On 12 August 1885, the Corporation had defrauded the King to the extent of ten lakhs of rupees by taking away 56,702 logs without entering them in the books. They also decided that the Ningyan lease should be cancelled. The plan to cancel the lease was, however, given up and it was decided to insist on a fine. The Burmese Government was badly in need of money, and the amount charged from the Corporation was expected to provide a welcome relief.

The Company was, of course, not at all prepared to surrender. It was confident that the British Government 'surely would not like to see the Corporation ruined, and permit the Burmese to be guided by the French.' The London Agents of the Corporation brought the matter to the notice of the Secretary of State, who asked for the Viceroy's advice. The Viceroy accepted the Chief Commissioner's suggestion, that the King should be requested to take measures for the amicable settlement of the dispute. On 28 August 1885, the Chief Commissioner wrote a letter to the Burmese Foreign Minister, asking him whether he was prepared to suspend the decree against the Corporation, and whether he was prepared to settle the dispute according to the verdict of an arbitrator to be appointed by the Viceroy.

Meanwhile the Burmese Government had asked the Corporation to pay the sum of Rs. 23,59,066 in four equal monthly instalments, failing which their timber in the Ningyan forests was to be confiscated to the extent of the default. On 31 August the Chief Commissioner sent a telegram to the Burmese Foreign Minister, asking him not to press the Corporation for payment, and warning him that 'serious consequences might arise' if the case was summarily dealt with. No reply was received from Mandalay, but Burmese troops advanced towards the frontier and fired at British rafts. A few days later the Burmese Foreign Minister wrote to the Chief Commissioner that the statements of the Bombay-Burma Corporation were untrue and that the Corporation had 'fraudulently exported, without payment of royalty, timber which should have paid royalty.' Under these circumstances the Minister thought that the question of arbitration did not arise, and the Chief Commissioner was 'distinctly informed' that 'on no

account whatever could there be any suspension or modification of any necessary order or action against the Bombay-Burma Company. To this letter the Chief Commissioner replied on 22 October, stating that the Minister's reply was not acceptable to the Government of India, and insisting upon three demands: (1) An envoy from the Viceroy should be suitably received at Mandalay, and the case of the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation should be settled in communication with him. (2) All action against the Corporation should be suspended till the arrival of the envoy. (3) For the future an envoy from the Viceroy should be allowed to reside at Mandalay with proper securities for his safety, and treated honourably. If a satisfactory reply did not reach the Chief Commissioner on or before 10 November, the British Government would proceed to such action as they deemed fit. Neither the Chief Commissioner nor the Viceroy would receive any Burmese mission or enter into any discussion about these demands. Two additional demands were also put forward: (1) The Burmese Government should regulate the external relations of the realm in accordance with the advice of the Viceroy. (2) The Burmese Government should afford complete facilities for opening up British trade with China. All details regarding these proposals were to be settled later on by discussion between the Burmese Ministers and the British envoy.

It was not expected that the proud Burmese King would accept these humiliating conditions and reduce himself to the position of the Indian Princes. So the Viceroy issued orders for the immediate preparation of a force numbering 10,000 men and the Chief Commissioner took measures for the safety of Europeans living in Upper Burma. General Prendergast was appointed to take charge of the expedition and invested with supreme political as well as military authority. He was instructed to occupy Mandalay and dethrone Thibaw; he was to be informed later on whether Upper Burma was to be annexed.

The Burmese reply to the British ultimatum was received by the Chief Commissioner on 9 November. The Burmese Foreign Minister denied that the judgment on the Bombay-

Burma Trading Corporation was passed in an arbitrary manner. Yet the King was prepared 'to look after and assist foreign merchants so that they should not suffer any hardship,' if the Corporation presented a petition to him. With regard to the establishment of a British Embassy, at Mandalay, the Burmese Government was ready to permit a British envoy 'to reside and come in and go out as in former times.' All merchants and traders, trying to increase trade between Burma and China, would be 'assisted in conformity with the customs of the land.' With reference to the demand about the regulation of the foreign relations, the Minister stated, ' . . . the internal and external affairs of an independent separate State are regulated and controlled in accordance with the customs and laws of that State. Friendly relations with France, Italy and other States have been, are being, and will be maintained. Therefore in determining the question whether or not it is proper that one Government alone should make any such claim, the Burmese Government can follow the joint decision of the three States,—France, Germany and Italy, who are friends of both Governments. . . . ' It is obvious that the Burmese Government did not expect this reply to be regarded as satisfactory by the British authorities. Without waiting for the Chief Commissioner's reply King Thibaw issued a proclamation asking his subjects to fight for the cause of religion and national honour. He declared that he would himself march at the head of his army in order to 'efface these heretic *kalās* and conquer and annex their country.'

The Government of India regarded the Burmese reply as unsatisfactory and authorised General Prendergast to advance upon Mandalay (13 November). General Prendergast started at once and made a 'procession' up the Irrawaddy 'almost unopposed.' 'Such opposition,' says Sir Charles Crosthwaite, 'as there had been was childish in its feebleness and want of skill and purpose. Fortunately for us the King and his Ministers prided themselves on their voluntary army system; . . . Unfortunately the soldiers to whom he trusted were insufficiently trained, badly armed and equipped. He had intended, perhaps, to remedy all this and to train his troops for six months before the fighting began. His enemy,

however, was unreasonably hasty and had an abundance of fast steamers for transporting the invading force. As he proceeded up the river, General Prendergast destroyed some stockades and took some forts. Within a few days he appeared before Ava, where the bulk of the defending army had been collected. On 26 November, he was met there by a Burmese Minister begging for an armistice. The Minister was told that the King's life would be spared if he surrendered himself, his army, and Mandalay, and if the Europeans at the capital were left unharmed. On 27 November, the King accepted all the demands and the army surrendered. General Prendergast arrived at Mandalay on 28 November, and received the formal submission of the King on the following day. No armed resistance was offered to the invaders. The Chief Commissioner informed the Secretary of State that the people and priests were coming in and willingly accepting the new situation. Later experience, however, proved, as Sir Charles Crosthwaite says, 'that a considerable minority of population, to say the least, did not want us.'

ANNEXATION OF UPPER BURMA

It has already been observed that the Government of India had not finally decided to annex Upper Burma when General Prendergast was despatched to occupy Mandalay. As soon as the news of the success of the expedition was available in England, the Liverpool General Brokers' Association and the London Chamber of Commerce requested the Secretary of State to 'resolve on the immediate and permanent annexation of Upper Burma.' In a despatch to the Government of India, dated 31 December 1885, Lord Randolph Churchill stated that the annexation of Upper Burma was 'the inevitable result' of King Thibaw's deposition. The proclamation of annexation was issued by Lord Dufferin on 1 January 1886.

Lord Dufferin was at first disposed to convert Upper Burma into a protected State instead of assuming the direct administration of the country, but in February 1886 he changed his mind. He explained his reasons in a Minute dated 17 February 1886. It was not possible to convert Upper Burma into a buffer state like Afghanistan, which would remain perfectly independent in matters of internal administration.

but submit to British 'supervision' over external relations. It was too weak to defend itself, and might drag England into war with China. Nor could Upper Burma be maintained as 'a fully protected State, with a native dynasty and native officials, but under a British Resident, who should exercise a certain control over the internal administration, as well as over its relations with foreign Powers.' The Burmese princes were not 'highly civilised, intelligent, and capable persons' like the rulers of Indian States. 'A puppet King of the Burmese type would prove a very expensive, troublesome, and contumacious fiction.' But the greatest difficulty in pursuing this course was that there was no prince of the Royal House to whom the trust could be safely confided. The only available respectable candidate was the Myingoon Prince, who was under French influence. Lord Dufferin even considered the plan of placing a Lama at the head of a protected Burmese State, but he dismissed it as of 'too experimental a character.' Upper Burma was incorporated in British India on 26 February 1886.

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